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Monitoring Social Inequalities in Health: Significance and Strengths of Information Sources

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Objectives: This article reflects conceptually on social inequalities in health and about the sources of data that are crucial to the decision-making process and institutional changes in the health field in Brazil.

Methodology: Analytical and Interpretative

Results: The author emphasizes the need to undertake a deep debate about social inequalities. She considers as important points of discussion some factors such as the identification of different situations in health, the concept of vulnerability, and the parameters of the study. She feels it is necessary to seek strategic information to enable the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public policies.

In this sense, the author deems it necessary to first discuss the scope of the indicators to determine whether they are relevant to deepen the theme of health and visualize potential interventions. Then, she debates the way information obtained is used so that it can better serve the decision-making and institutional policy change. The understanding of the magnitude of the differences in the health conditions of social groups is an ongoing task that demands continue reformulations and reassessment.

Conclusions: For the author, the limits, ambiguities and gaps in the study of inequities in health must be integrated with analytical narrative efforts, as opposed to the search for simplistic explanatory linear models. Only from an interdisciplinary perspective is it possible to build a new, significant data base useful for the development and implementation of health policies that are able to meet the challenge of equity.